



Politics of Immigration Reform

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WOLF BLITZER, CNN ANCHOR: I'm Wolf Blitzer. You're in THE SITUATION ROOM.

One of Hillary Clinton's rivals is being accused of being Clintonesque about driver's licenses for illegal immigrants, and he's using Senator Clinton's interview right here in THE SITUATION ROOM yesterday with Candy Crowley to try to prove it.

Plus, are Clinton and the other Democratic presidential candidates dropping the ball on the issue of illegal immigration? I'll ask Arizona's Democratic governor, Janet Napolitano. She's here in THE SITUATION ROOM.

BLITZER: With immigration reform deadlocked in Congress, the presidential candidates are bickering among themselves over this red-hot issue, and the nation's governors are being forced to take the lead in trying to figure out how to cope with the huge numbers of illegal immigrants into the United States right

now.

And joining us now here in THE SITUATION ROOM, the Democratic governor of Arizona, Governor Janet Napolitano.

Governor, thanks for coming in.

GOV. JANET NAPOLITANO (D), ARIZONA: You're welcome.

BLITZER: Did your colleague, New York State Governor Eliot Spitzer, make a mistake when he decided it was a good idea to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants?

NAPOLITANO: Well, Governor Spitzer has to make his own decision with respect to his state, but it's unfortunate that a driver's license now has become the issue vis-a-vis immigration, because that's not really the central part of immigration. We need fundamental comprehensive immigration reform, we need more support at the border.

BLITZER: But that's not happening, the comprehensive...

NAPOLITANO: That's right.

BLITZER: The president tried it, he had support from McCain, he had support from Ted Kennedy, but it collapsed.

NAPOLITANO: That's right.

BLITZER: It looks like that's dead for the time being.

NAPOLITANO: For the time being it is.

Let me tell you what we've done in Arizona. We are not going to be issuing driver's licenses to those in the country and our state illegally, but we are going to issue a basic driver's license to anyone who currently qualifies, and then we're going to have a second license, assuming my legislature approves when they reconvene in January, that would satisfy the requirements of Real ID, the new federal law governing licensure, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, and our own state Employer Sanctions Law.

BLITZER: Because he also has this three-tier system, Governor Spitzer, that, you know, citizens can get either the Real ID or a normal driver's license, but there would be a third level of a driver's license that illegal immigrants could get that couldn't be used, for example, for federal I.D. purposes.

NAPOLITANO: Yes, that's not our intent in Arizona. And again...

BLITZER: So just to be clear, in Arizona illegal immigrants don't get any kind of driver's license?

NAPOLITANO: They do not qualify for a driver's license.

BLITZER: All right.

Here's what the Democratic presidential frontrunner, Senator Hillary Clinton, told our Candy Crowley this week on the CNN Election Express. Listen to this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: It depends upon what state they're in, it depends on what they think the risks are. You know, a governor of New York that has a lot of immigrants, many of whom

we know are not there legally, has to worry about security. A governor of another state where that's not a problem doesn't.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BLITZER: All right. Is she trying to have it both ways? Do you understand what her position is?

NAPOLITANO: Well, I think the senator is -- what she's really saying when you back up, is that the states are all going to do different things. Why? Because of the failure of the administration and the Congress to come to grips with immigration reform.

Really, I hope the next statement is, "As president of the United States, I'm going to readdress immigration, we're going to get a law that's enforced, enforceable, and my budgets are going to contain the resources to sustain it."

BLITZER: Are you satisfied with any of the Democratic presidential candidates in the way they're dealing with the issues of particular concern to states out West?

NAPOLITANO: I'm not saying I'm dissatisfied. I think it's early enough that they haven't yet begun to address those.

The first debate in my region of the country won't be until the 15th of November. And so as they get out there, I think immigration, for one, perhaps water as well, will become issues that we will first hear their articulation of their opinions.

BLITZER: Because there's been some criticism they're really ignoring some of those issues that are of keen interest to westerners.

NAPOLITANO: Oh, I don't think they're ignoring. I think there's only so much time

in any particular debate, and the formats really haven't permitted a lot of -- addressing a lot of issues. So there are obviously going to be regional differences. Now they're moving to the West.

BLITZER: Because you know next Thursday, we're going to be out in Las Vegas, Nevada, for this Democratic presidential debate.

What would you like to hear from these seven Democratic presidential candidates?

NAPOLITANO: I would like to hear what they're going to do about immigration and how they're going to address the federal failure to have a comprehensive reform of our existing law, which quite frankly doesn't work. So we have to have reform.

BLITZER: Do you want this fence along the border between Arizona and Mexico?

NAPOLITANO: Well, I want some fencing, but I want manpower, I want radar, I want ground sensors, and I want interior enforcement for those who get through the border.

BLITZER: Is it your sense that Hillary Clinton, who is the Democratic frontrunner, obviously, in all of the national polls, may be too polarizing for people out West?

NAPOLITANO: No. No, I think -- I think she is someone that westerners will listen to. If she becomes the nominee, they will have an open mind about her, because they'll be thinking about her in a different role, should they be president of the United States. The westerners aren't familiar particularly with Senator Obama, former Senator Edwards. So all of them have the opportunity to persuade, and I believe all of them, and others as well, are very qualified to serve as president.

BLITZER: You haven't endorsed anyone yet?

NAPOLITANO: I have not.

BLITZER: Are you -- at some point do you think you will?

NAPOLITANO: My plan right now is not to.

BLITZER: To stay out of it?

NAPOLITANO: I'm very happy...

BLITZER: Let the political dust settle?

NAPOLITANO: I'm going to ride my horse in the middle of the river, but to me we have very many qualified candidates. And I'm going to be ready to support whoever comes out.

BLITZER: Governor Napolitano, thanks for coming in.

NAPOLITANO: Thank you a lot.